

14th Minnesota River Congress
Action Strategy Questionnaire Responses

Q 1. Given the spirit, intent, and statute wording of the Water Storage Program, are there **implementation components** that fall within that, which currently have not been identified or considered appropriate or applicable to date?

Responses:

-Set project deadlines, time is of the essence

-I would like to see drained basins that historically did not contribute water to the Minnesota River to be targeted. We can disagree with all the modeling out there. If you truly take a small watershed and keep it from entering the river it would be much easier than a dispute over sources.

-Always help others to understand who, why, and when of Water Storage. Who is it, why is it important, and when is it important?

-CREP and RIM need to be funded and expanded. Many framers will cooperate and retire land and create wetlands etc. if funding is available.

-Managing controlling and recording where drain tile is and where it drains into.

-Wording of implementation needs to be concrete and focused. Not everything needs to hit several goals.

-Suggestive wording like “should be” allows for loopholes and confusion in enforcement of programs. Also, the jargon needs to be more accessible.

-Don't shy away from root causes.

-Non-structural practices seem to be de-emphasized in the current BWSR program (for example soil health, profile storage and vegetative practices).

-Need to fit water storage that can be designed and built with an improvement on the entire system.

-Focus on 25+year life projects. WASCOBs are Not an acceptable practice to fund.

-Should private landowners or corporations be eligible for the grants? It doesn't sound like they qualify but they could be major stakeholders.

-Not sure, could be similar to other banking programs. Landowner creates state pays \$

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Q 2. Having our Water Storage Program established, are there **components** in its current makeup or support **cooperators** missing that could make our efforts a higher priority at the federal level, if so what or who would they be?

Responses:

-Yes. Determine cost effectiveness and how much money and lives projects would save us all. Get the Army Corps of Engineers on board.

-Measuring or predicting the amount of storage and downstream impacts a project may have is difficult. Engineers across disciplines and agencies do not agree on modeling inputs or results. Engineers with state agencies often do not agree, this makes it difficult for local units of government to trust.

-Provide funding to stop riverbank erosion on banks where existing "bends" in the river occur and side banks are falling into the river.

-The question is OK-yet, my thoughts are that in So. MN all projects should work with private/public dollars which are Ag drainage planning->to include not only consider other conservation applications when ditch improvements are happening.

-Funding, US Army Corps of Engineers and flood mitigation dollars.

-We need to know and have survey record of where the drain tile in all MN is so that we know what the scope of the volume is. Maybe have a tile drainage inventory component to the water storage program.

-Management plans should be specialized for each watershed, then synergized for overall health.

-Drainage law federal/state ag regulation→incorporating drainage with storage project is key to getting more organization involved more facets to the program.

-Region 9 Development Commission and connections to the federal EDA Economic Administration to make the economic case for water storage

-Question 2 is too early to answer considering that the FY 22 projects have not been awarded by BWSR yet, nor the measurable outcomes determined.

-NRCS

Do the programs involve municipal governments as well as SWCD's? Is there anything that MN DOT can do? Like further integrating retention ponds or vegetation into the projects?

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Q 3. What further strategies can we as a collective take to advance the participation of the federal government in our Water Storage Program?

Responses:

- Tell the feds how much money they would save by doing projects, get the US Army Corps of Engineers on board.
- One of the largest costs of water storage is purchasing an easement or outright buying the land. Programs that buy land do not often consider reducing peak flows or sustaining low flows, that sucks.
- Speed up the process of getting cost share funding to landowners.
- There must be cooperation and buy in from ag communities, cities, counties, townships and more to see this as a benefit not a threat.
- Sediment removal programs→ Natural storage bank of river sediments are found in flood plains and Ox bow lake areas. These areas could have sediment removal during dry seasons so they can store and collect more and collect more sediment.
- Private ownership of land
- Controlled drainage---allows drainage and storage---will need funding to help cover the additional cost of construction
- Pursue engaging National climate change funds and measures. There needs to be proven hydrologic benefit for agricultural farmers to put in drain tile.
- Networking, connections, working with ag corporations and ag companies are going to be highly influential with the federal government's involvement with this program.
- Questions 2 and 3 are too early to answer considering that the FY 22 projects have not been awarded by BWSR yet nor the measurable outcomes determined.
- Are there more connections we can make with the federal efforts at flood control. It would be great to see the Army Corps of Engineers pursue flood control efforts that are more realistic than more dams and levees.
- RCPP program PL 566? Need to fit to NRCS practice standards or create new NRCS standards.

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Q 4. We currently do not have long term program commitment from the State for Water Storage, should establishment of that be a priority for the Minnesota River Congress and cooperators?

Responses:

-Yes, for sure

-Yes, a lot of thought should be given to the plan holder or keeper of the program. Not sure who or what that should be. Individually DNR, MPCA, MDA, MASWCD, Drainage work group, all have things that would conflict with the program.

-Yes, of course, slow down the rate of runoff and store in basins etc. Release at a slow rate.

-Yes, do some projects, show successes, then get long term funding and buy in.

-Depends on what's being proposed and if the programs are voluntary or mandated.

-Yes, If we are going to discuss the artificially large volume of water we need to store, we need to discuss and scientifically establish where the water comes from.

-Yes, establishing a long-term committee would provide the opportunity to tackle problems before they become widespread and it provides long term monetary relief. Implementing long term monitoring would also ensure success in remedying current water volume problems.

-Yes, 48 more times

Miscellaneous additional input

Use funds to work with Di Tech Drainage Authority, Engineering, and matching funds.

Focus on urban runoff is good however many of the problems come from agriculture, watersheds flow through the whole area not just urban areas.

Necessary to get sedimentation under control using plant species and land strategies known to hold sediment. Constructed wetlands serve good purpose with filtering high nutrient input and are important around water sources.

Communication is necessary for this large-scale type of restoration. Meetings cannot be focused on one or two times a year. Widespread information about basic facts such as sedimentation, drainage or even wetland benefit must be put out.

Having more outreach opportunities would be helpful.

Water storage happens with lakes too. They can store more water more effectively. Create dynamic farmland if certain areas of fields get consistently flooded. Communicate turning these areas into small wetlands which would increase infiltration.

Several resources can be used such as site history and geography to create structures/projects that can reestablish natural channels and streams which help with rates and storages.

Don't be vague, these goals definitions and plans need concrete wording. Goals must have a concrete end and beginning. X reduced by 80% Y increased in these areas etc.